

# RHETORICAL DEVICES MANUAL

## [RDM]

The following are the rhetorical devices, style elements, and vital vocabulary you will need to comprehend a piece of written work. Please use wisely and well.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PERIOD:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mr. Williams' AP English Language Class**

**Miami Northwestern Senior High**

# A

## Ad Hominem Argument:

This is an argument that appeals to emotion rather than reason – feeling rather than intellect. This is also known as “mud-slinging.”

## Allusion:

A reference to well-known person, place, thing, or event that the writer assumes the reader will be familiar with. **She swoops in to help with Herculean strength.**

## Analogy:

Comparison of apparently largely dissimilar objects to reveal similarities. See Metaphor. **Pets are like plants. If you give them lots of care and attention, they grow strong and healthy. If you neglect them, they become weak and sickly.**

## Anecdote:

A brief story used to illustrate or make a point.

## Argumentation:

One of the 4 chief forms of discourse. The others being narration, exposition, and description. Its purpose is to convince by establishing the truth or falsity of a proposition.

## Appeals to ethos:

One of the three strategies for persuading audiences – appeals to ethics (what's right or wrong)

## Appeals to logos:

One of the three strategies for persuading audiences through logic

## Appeals to pathos:

One of the three strategies for persuading audiences through emotion, appealing to feelings rather than reason

## Ad Populeum Argument:

Appealing to the passions and prejudices of a group rather than its reason. **An appeal to support an issue because it's the “American Way.”**

## Allegory:

An extended metaphor using objects, characters, and events to represent larger meanings; A narrative or description having a second meaning beneath the surface one. The interaction of characters, things, events is meant to reveal an abstraction or a truth. These characters, etc. may be symbolic of the ideas referred to.

## Anaphora:

Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause at the beginning of two or more sentences in a row. This device is a deliberate form of repetition and helps make the writer's point more coherent. **“We cannot concede, we cannot give in, we cannot let them see us cry! This pain must end!”**

## Aphorism:

This is a terse statement of known authorship which is an expression of insight and wisdom; a life lesson – see adage or maxim. **“Live life to the fullest!”**

## Apostrophe:

A digression in the form of an address to someone not present, or to a personified object or idea. **“O Death, where is thy sting?”**

## Antithesis:

A balancing of two opposite or contrasting words, phrases, or clauses

## Attitude:

A writer's intellectual position or emotion regarding the subject of the writing.

## Adage:

A saying or proverb containing a truth based on experience and often couched in metaphorical language; an idiom. **“There is more than one way to skin a cat.”**

## Alliteration:

The repetition of beginning consonant sound of words. **The chocolate chip cookie was crunchy.**

## Anachronism:

This is placing something in a time when it was not in existence. **The watch Merlyn wore in The Once and Future King.**

Audience:

The group for whom a work is intended.

Assonance:

The repetition of the vowel sounds within words. **I fly high when I dream of my lover.**

Abstract Noun:

Ideas or things that can mean many things to many people, such as peace, honor, respect, etc.

Anti-Climax/ Anti-Climactic:

An event or experience that causes disappointment because it is less exciting than was expected or because it happens immediately after a much more interesting or exciting event.

Assertion:

The claim or point the author is making.

**B**

Begging THE Question (petitio principii):

The situation that results when a writer/speaker constructs an argument on an assumption that the audience does not accept. This involves using a premise to support itself. **The death penalty is wrong because killing people is immoral.**

Burlesque:

A work of literature meant to ridicule a subject; a grotesque imitation.

Bias:

A preference or an inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment.

Bildungsroman:

A bildungsroman is a novel that traces the development of a character from childhood to adulthood, through a quest for identity that leads him or her to maturity.

Blog Post:

An entry on a personal or professional website called a blog; can be on any topic, from point of view and written for various audiences, various purposes. Truly democratic genre; anyone can write a blog. (Also known as a **Weblog Post**.)

Bibliomancy:

This term refers to the practice of basing a plot happening or event and anticipating the results it will have on a faction of the Bible. It involves a random selection process wherein the biblical passage is chosen as a founding stone for basing the outcome of future events or in literature. **The homosexual situation is today's Sodom and Gomorrah.**

**C**

Causal Relationship (Cause-and-effect)

A relationship expressing "If X is the cause, then Y is the effect," or "If Y is the effect, then X caused it."

Colloquialism:

Informal usage of words or phrases – not formal language. **That girl is a Thot!**

Connotation:

Interpretive level of a word based on its associated images rather than its literal meaning. Implications. **See Denotation.**

Claim:

The ultimate conclusion, generalization, or point, backed up by support, of an argument.

Cliché:

Timeworn and commonplace expression; trite description. **My love has been tried and true.**

Context:

The matter that surrounds the word or text in question, lending it significance, even irony. An accurate analysis of a word or portion of text depends upon a full understanding of the overall context.

### Concrete:

Words or terms denoting something tangible, palpable, visible, or otherwise evident to the senses. Concrete is opposite to abstract. **Illness is abstract, while an ulcer is concrete.**

### Circumlocution:

Literally, "talking around" a subject; i.e., discourse that avoids direct reference to a subject.

### Cacophony:

Harsh, dissonant sounds in recited poetry. It is deliberately used by the poet to bring reader's attention to the content (syn. Dissonance); **(Ant. Euphony)**

### Cadence:

The rhythm of phrases or sentences created through repetitive elements. (See Syntax)

### Candor:

Open and honest communication; truthfulness.

### Catalog (List):

A list of details that reinforces a concept. Inductive arguments build to a conclusion based on the collective impression of lists.

### Counterexample:

An exception to a proposed general rule.

### Concession:

The use of a word, phrase or sentence that diminishes and may contradict implications of a statement or description. Words or phrases commonly used in English to indicate concession are "however," "nevertheless," "despite," "in spite of," "even so," and "although."

### Creative Nonfiction:

A relatively new genre, creative nonfiction tells true stories using the tools fiction writers use, such as plot narratives, imagery, dialogue, and more. Topics are diverse, from personal narrative to travelogues, and more.

### Critique (Criticism):

Similar to a review, a critique points out the strengths and weaknesses of a work (art, literature, speech, performance, etc.)

### Commentary:

anything serving to illustrate a point, prompt a realization, or exemplify, especially in the case of something unfortunate. **There are 2 popular types: social and political.** Also known as recognizing the human condition.

## D

### Diction:

The author's choice of words and expressions. It can represent the educational, social, and emotional state of the characters or narrator. Patterns of diction can be predominantly formal, informal, or neutral; positive or negative in connotation; euphonic or cacophonous in sound; concrete or abstract; specific or general; mono- or polysyllabic.

### Discourse:

Communication of thought by words; talk; conversation. Discussion.

### Diatribes:

Bitter argument, accusation, or harangue.

### Didactic:

The primary aim of these works is to teach or instruct, esp. the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

### Denotation:

Literal or dictionary meaning of a word. Contrast with **Connotation**.

### Digression:

That portion of discourse that wanders or departs from the main subject or topic.

### Deductive Reasoning:

A method of reasoning by which specific definitions, conclusions, and theorems are drawn from general principles. A method of reasoning from the general to the specific. Making an inference. **Its opposite is inductive reasoning.**

### Damn with faint praise:

Accolades with words which effectively condemn by seeming to offer praise which is too moderate or marginal to be considered praise at all.

### Dilemma:

Basically an either/or situation, typically a moral decision or crossroads. **False dilemma** is simplifying a complex problem into an either/or dichotomy.

### Double Entendre:

A phrase or saying that has two meanings, one generally being sexual or provocative in nature.

### Debate:

A traditional debate is spoken event in which participants (two opposing teams) argue (with supporting details) a controversial issue. Candidates may give their own points of view on a topic.

### Diary:

An account that is kept daily, or almost daily, by an individual to record events of his/her life and to express his/her views. Also known as **journal** or **log**.

## E

### Emphasis:

The weighting and development of particular elements by means of climactic order, placement, repetition, accumulation of detail, or contrast, emphasis indicates the relative importance of such elements to the text.

### Euphemism:

Less offensive, more agreeable words and expressions that substitute other more harsh words. **The slow-witted girl stood speechless in front of the class.**

### Elegy:

Song, poem, or speech lamenting someone or something who is dead.

### Euphony:

The pleasant, mellifluous presentation of sounds in a literary work.

### Enthymeme:

A syllogism in which one of the premises—often the major theme—is unstated, but meant to be understood. **"Children should be seen and not heard. Shut up John."**

### Exegesis:

A detailed analysis or interpretation of a work of prose or poetry.

### Exposé:

A factual piece of writing that reveals weaknesses, faults, frailties, or other shortcomings.

### Episodic:

Appearing in episodes, a long string of short, individual scenes, stories, or sections, rather than focusing on the sustained development of a single plot.

### Excerpt:

A short portion of a larger text meant to stand on its own. You may be asked to infer the broader context of an excerpt, such as from what genre it was excerpted or the identity of the intended audience.

### Editorial:

Written by the editor of a newspaper, traditionally, it expresses the view of the editor or the editorial staff on an issue prominent in the news. An editorial is typically short (300-350 words) and generally persuasive.

### Eye Witness Account:

A first-person report (primary source) of an individual who witnesses an important or significant event. As each person's point of view is affected by a wide variety of limiting factors, more than one account is desired for a more objective view of reality.

## F

### Figurative Language:

Word or expression used in a non-literal way. It is usually symbolic or metaphoric. Figures of speech include, among others, metaphor, simile, and personification.

Farce:

A comedy that contains an extravagant and nonsensical disregard of seriousness, although it may have a serious, scornful purpose.

Fable:

A narrative meant to teach a lesson in which the characters are sometimes animals, representing human types or specific human beings, especially if used for satirical purposes.

Foreshadowing:

The use of indicative word or phrases and hints that set the stage for a story to unfold and give the reader a hint of something that is going to happen without revealing the story or spoiling the suspense.

Foil:

A foil is another character in a story who contrasts with the main character, usually to highlight one of their attributes.

Flashback:

The occurrence of specific events to the reader, which have taken place before the present time the narration is following, or events that have happened before the events that are currently unfolding in the story. **Yes, last year, the same thing happened when I was the new student in her class.**

Faulty Parallelism:

In literature, the term 'parallelism' is used to refer to the practice placing together similarly structure related phrases, words or clauses. Parallelism involves placing sentence items in a parallel grammatical format wherein nouns are listed together, specific verb forms are listed together and the like. When one fails to follow this parallel structure, it results in faulty parallelism.

## G

Generalization:

A statement that asserts some broad truth based upon a knowledge of specifics. Generalizations are the end products of inductive reasoning.

Genre:

French word, depicting a type of literary form; classifications. E.g. tragedy, comedy, novel, essay, poetry, etc.

## H

Hubris:

Overwhelming pride or insolence that results in the misfortune of the protagonist of a tragedy. It is the particular form of tragic flaw that results from excessive pride, ambition, or overconfidence. This usually affects tone. Also called *hybris*.

Homily:

Literary device found in writings that tend to involve moral or spiritual advice, usually a sermon or lecture, generally in a narrative style, with a moralizing (didactic) purpose.

Hyperbole:

Conscious exaggeration used to heighten effect. They usually have a comic effect, but a serious effect is possible. As well, they often produce irony at the same time. **"And fired the shot heard around the world."**

Humor:

A mode of comedy that is sympathetic and tolerant toward human nature, exposing the ridiculous, ludicrous, and comical in human affairs. Its cousin, wit, is intellectual, and tends to be satirical and less tolerant. *See Comedy and Wit.*

Harangue:

A forceful lecture, sermon, or tirade.

Hypothetical Example (a hypothetical):

An example based on supposition or uncertainty. A "what if."

History/Historical Commentary:

A history is a factual account of an event or period in time. A historical commentary is one person's view of that event, so opinion is based on research, fact, or observation.

## I

Idyll:

A lyric poem or passage that describes a kind of ideal life or place.

#### Indirect Quotation:

A rendering of a quotation in which actual words are not stated but only approximated or paraphrased.

#### Inductive Reasoning:

A method of reasoning in which a number of specific facts, data, or examples are used to make a generalization. A method of reasoning that moves from specific instances to a general conclusion. It's the opposite of deductive reasoning.

#### Incongruity:

The linking of two incompatible things. Such a lack of correspondence may be humorous.

#### Intertextuality:

The various relationships a text may have with other texts, through allusions, borrowing of formal or thematic elements, or simply by reference to traditional literary form. It is argued that texts relate primarily to one another and not to an external reality.

#### Invocation:

A prayer for inspiration to a god or muse, usually placed in the beginning of an epic.

#### Idiom:

Words used in a special way that may be different from their actual meaning. They are usually universally popular expressions also known as adages. **Speak up! Cat's got your tongue?**

#### Invective:

Emotional violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

#### Imagery:

The use of words to represent things, actions, or ideas by sensory details and descriptions. These sensory details describe, arouse emotions, and create atmosphere. Sometimes these images are symbolic. Visually stimulating language and devices.

**Image:** graph, chart, or other infographic. Could also be a photograph or other type of visual image.

#### Irony:

An implied discrepancy between what happens and what was intended or expected to happen, often implying ridicule or light sarcasm. Verbal, situational, dramatic, and Socratic are the different types.

**Verbal:** when an author says one thing and

means something else.

**Situational:** discrepancy between the expected results and the actual results.

**Dramatic:** when an audience perceives what a character in literature does not.

\* **The portly man, called Slim by his friends, made it to the party.**

\* **The trash can stood in the midst of the swarming garbage.**

**Socratic:** when a speaker feigns ignorance of a topic to see someone else's' stance.

\* **Mother asks child: "What's going on with your grades?" Even though she knows the death of his father was affecting the child.**

#### Inference:

A conclusion or proposition arrived at by considering the facts, observations, or some other specific data.

**J**

#### Juxtaposition:

Putting two words, ideas, or graphics together to create a new, often ironic meaning.

**Oh, the joys of winter blizzards!**

#### Juvenilia:

Writings produced in an author's youth.

#### Jeremiad:

A prolonged lamentation or complaint.

# K

N/A

# L

Litotes:

Opposite of hyperbole; litotes intensifies an idea understatement by stating through the opposite. **"It wasn't my best day."** *Versus* **"It was my worst day."**

Lampoon:

Harsh satire directed against an individual.

Local Color:

Use of details that are common in a certain place. **A story that takes place on a seacoast would probably contain details about the water and life of people near it.**

Literal Language:

The factual sort of discourse that is without embellishment, though not necessarily flat; the opposite of figurative.

Lyrical Prose:

Personal, reflective prose that reveals the speaker's thoughts and feelings about the subject.

Lexical Ambiguity:

The presence of two or more possible meanings within a single word. Also called homonymy.

Letter (Epistle):

Letters can take various forms, from business letters to personal correspondence. Letters from writers, politicians, artists, and others are viewed as historical documents or even as literary works. Letters are also written for a wide variety of purposes: to inform, persuade, entertain, satirize, criticize, and more. The term **"epistolary style"** means in letter form.

Literary Criticism:

Beyond a review, literary criticism measures a work of literature against current standards; an analysis of a work that investigates a certain aspect of the work, such

as symbolism, or irony. Literary Criticism may also discuss the work as seen through a specific literary theory, such as feminist, Freudian, or Marxist.

# M

Metonymy:

The name of a subject is substituted by a name closely related to it. **Calling the head of a committee a CHAIR, the king the CROWN, a newspaper the PRESS, or the old people the GRAY HAIRS.**

Mood:

An atmosphere created by a writer's word choice (diction) and the details selected. **Syntax** is also a determiner of mood because sentence strength, length, and complexity affect pacing. The Indicative mood is used for statements of fact; the subjunctive mood is used to express doubt or a conditional attitude; sentences in the imperative mood give commands.

Moral:

The lesson drawn from a fictional or nonfictional story. A heavily didactic story.

Metaphor:

A comparison of two things without using like or as, and the things are usually unrelated. They may be in one sentence or may be the entire work.

**Thievery is the disease that eats at the heart of society.**

Types of metaphors are:

Dead: So overused that its original impact has been lost.

Extended: one developed at length and involves several points of comparison.

Mixed: 2 metaphors that produce a contradictory or confused image.

The actual subject may be called the **tenor**, and the thing with which it is identified may be called the **vehicle**. The **grounds** are the aspects of the vehicle that apply to the tenor.



Meiosis:

Intentional understatement, as, for example, in Romeo and Juliet, when Mercutio is mortally wounded and says it is only a "scratch." Opposite of *Hyperbole*.

Mimesis:

Imitation or mimicry of another's style or language.

Motivation:

The combination of a character's moral nature and the circumstances he or she is in. The reasons, justifications, or explanations for a character's actions.

Malapropism:

A humorous misuse of language that results from substituting an incorrect word for one with similar sound.

Maxim:

A saying or proverb expressing common wisdom or truth. **See also adage or aphorism.**

Mock Serious:

Characterized by feigned or deliberately artificial seriousness, often for satirical purposes.

Motif:

A phrase, idea, or event that though repetition serves to unify or convey a theme in an essay or other discourse.

Montage:

A quick succession of images or impressions used to express an idea.

Mode:

The general form, pattern, and manner of expression of a piece of discourse.

Memoir:

The general form, pattern, and manner of expression of a piece of discourse.

Monologue:

One voice, generally first-person, narrates a train of thought or consciousness on one topic. Typically spoken, as on the stage for an audience.

## N

N/A

## O

Onomatopoeia:

The use of a word whose sound makes you think of its meaning. **The dripping of the water kept me up all night.**

Oxymoron:

Two words with opposite meanings put together for a special effect; juxtaposed opposites. **Jumbo shrimp, deafening silence, old news**

Objective:

Of or relating to facts and reality, as opposed to private and personal feelings and attitudes. **Its opposite is subjective.**

Occasion:

The immediate context of a poetic utterance; the situation which motivated the persona's words. What is the reason/situation of the speech?

## P

Pacing:

The speed at which a piece of writing moves along. Pacing depends on the balance between summarizing action and representing action in detail. Syntax can also affect pacing.

Parody:

An exaggerated imitation of a usually more serious work for humorous purposes. The writer of a parody uses the quirks of style of the imitated piece in extreme or ridiculous ways.

Parallelism:

Similarities between elements in a narrative (such as two characters or two plot lines).

Grammatically: the use of similar structures or word order in two sentences or phrases to suggest a comparison or contrast between them.

Parable:

A short story from which a lesson may be drawn by means of allegory. **The Prodigal Son and 12 Virgins.**

Paradox:

A statement that is true even though it seems to be saying two different or opposite things. **The more free time I have, the less I get done.**

Personification:

Giving human characteristics to animals, objects, or ideas. Also known as abstraction. **The low-hanging clouds ran and hid behind the mountains; the sun had come out to play.**

Paralipsis:

Technique of drawing attention to something by claiming not to mention it.

Pun:

The usage of words that seemingly bring a funny effect. The similarity in sound between two words with distinctly different meanings. **The fisherman thought that something fishy when he saw that his bait was missing.**

Paraenesis:

Written piece containing advice and admonition.

Paraphrase:

A version of text put into simpler, everyday words or summarized for brevity.

Point of View [POV]:

The relation in which a narrator or speaker stands to a subject of discourse. A matter discussed in the first person has an **internal** Point of view; an observer uses an **external** point of view.

Prose:

Any composition or discourse, not written in verse (POETRY). The basic unit of prose is the sentence, which distinguishes it from free verse.

Pathetic Fallacy:

The attribution of human feelings or motivation to a nonhuman object, especially an object found in nature. **John Keats uses this in "Ode to Melancholy."**

Polysyndeton:

Sentence which uses and or another conjunction, with no commas, to separate the items in a series, usually appearing in the form X and Y and Z, stressing equally each member of the series. It makes the sentence slower and the items more emphatic than in the asyndeton.

Purple Prose:

Excessively affected or sentimental writing intended to manipulate reader's feelings and emotions.

Proverb:

A short, pithy statement of a general truth that condenses common experience into memorable form. **See also adage and maxim.**

Pseudonym:

A false name or alias used by writers.

Premise:

A [suggestion or proposition](#) supporting or helping to support a conclusion.

Philippic:

A strong verbal denunciation.

Personal Reminiscence:

First-person account of a particular event in time.

Political Cartoon:

Generally a one-celled comic, the political cartoon is primarily satire, which hopes to point out inadequacies or corruption in the political sphere.

Portmanteau:

Two or more words are joined together to coin a new word. A portmanteau word is formed by blending parts of two or more words but it always refers to a single concept. **South + Beach = SoBe.**

# Q

Qualifying a claim/statement:

"To qualify" means to show how a claim can be true in some ways but not true in others.

# R

Repetition:

Words, phrases, sounds, lines, or elements of syntax may repeat within a poem. Sometimes they add meaning to a work, but other times they dilute or dissipate the meaning. **Types include: alliteration, assonance, and refrain.**

Rhetorical Question:

A question that is asked not to elicit a response but to make an impact or call attention to something. **"Do you know what is wrong with today's society?"**

Rhetorical Accent/Stress:

In opposition to metrical accent, a stress on what would normally be an unaccented syllable, which clarifies the meaning or intention of the sentence. **Today** is the day for change!

Rhetorical Devices:

Figures of speech that are not the figurative language of metaphor. **These include** anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, parallelism, balance, pun, and the rhetorical question.

Roman a Clef:

A novel based on real persons and events. **For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Far Side of Paradise and Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises.**

Rhetoric:

The art of using persuasive language. The art of analyzing all the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective; the specific features of texts, written or spoken, that cause them to be meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners in a situation.

Rhetorical Modes/**Modes of Discourse:**

This term describes the conventions, variety, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. The four major types are: **[1] Exposition (Expository Writing)** – this explains and analyzes information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. **[2] Argumentation** is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convinces the reader. Persuasive writing is a type of argumentation having an additional aim of urging some form of action. **[3] Description** is to recreate, invent, and visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an author engages all five senses in description. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and objective or highly emotional and subjective. **[4] Narration** is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This mode usually uses descriptive language.

Rebuttal **or** Refutation:

The part of discourse wherein opposing arguments are anticipated and answered.

Reiteration:

Repetition of an idea using different words, often for emphasis or other effect.

Retraction:

The withdrawal of a previously stated idea or opinion.

Review:

Gives the writer's informed opinion about the quality of literary works, movies, or other visual media, art, music, even restaurants. Reviewers are called **Critics**.

# S

Simile:

Figure of speech that compares two, often dissimilar, things using like or as. **The ice cubes glistened like little diamonds in my glass.**

Sarcasm:

A simple form of **verbal irony** in which it is obvious from context and tone that the speaker means the opposite of what he/she says. Sarcasm usually, but not always, expresses scorn.

### Satire/Satiric/Satirize:

A work that ridicules as it criticizes the foibles and follies of society without necessarily finding a solution; it is usually funny or outlandish. These works while they ridicule the shortcomings of individuals, institutions, and society, they often make a political point. There are major two types:

**Horatio:** Satire which is indulgent, tolerant, amused, and witty, wryly and gently ridiculing human absurdities and follies, exemplified by the dramatic form known as the comedy of manners.

**Juvenalian:** This mode of satire attacks vice and error with contempt and indignation. It is realistic and harsh in tone.

#### A minor Satire:

**Mock Epic:** A satiric mode that applies the lofty style of the epic to a trivial subject, giving it dignity which it does not deserve and thus ridiculing it. This mode may also mock epics themselves, and the absurdity of the epic hero's pretentious qualities. Also called burlesque.

### Setting:

Locale and period in which the action takes place. Typically, setting is important to pay attention to as it dictates the actions, feelings and emotions of some characters. **Setting may include the geographical location, the daily manner of living, the epoch or season or time of day, the atmosphere, and the general environment, including religious, mental, moral, social, or emotional conditions and their symbolic meaning.** Setting usually symbolizes some things and can sometimes represent the antagonist.

### Suspense:

Use of uncertainty and anxiety to build excitement. It uses the element of anticipation.

### Syntax:

The arrangement of words in a sentence. Includes sentence length and complexity; the variety and pattern of sentence form; inversion of natural word order; unusual juxtaposition; repetition; parallelism; use of active or passive voice; level of discourse (see Usage); order, including emphatic or subordinate position of elements, etc.

### Symbolism:

An object, character, figure, or color that is used to represent an abstract idea or concept. Unlike an emblem, a symbol may have different meanings in different contexts.

### Synecdoche:

A form of metonymy in which a part of an entity is used to refer to the whole.

**"All hands on deck!" is frequently used by mariners.** Hands represent the whole person/sailor. **"threads" for clothes; "wheels" for cars.**

### Style:

The choice in diction, tone, and syntax that a writer makes. In combination, they create a work's manner of expression. Style is thought to be conscious and unconscious and may be altered to suit specific occasions. *Styles can be flowery, laconic, explicit, succinct, incisive, rambling, or bombastic, and commonplace.*

### Syllogism:

An argument or deductive system of logic that presents two premises that inevitably lead to a conclusion. Also known as an enthymeme. The two premises are (i) major and (2) minor.

**Major Premise: All men are mortal.**

**Minor Premise: Socrates is a man.**

**Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.**

### Synesthesia:

The use of one kind of sensory experience to describe another, such as in the line **"Herald melodies are sweet" in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."**

### Sentimentalism:

Overindulgence in emotion, especially the conscious effort to induce emotion in order to enjoy it; often an excess of romanticism. The reader is asked for an emotional response in excess of what the occasion merits; emotion replaces ethical and intellectual judgment.

Slanting:

The characteristic of selecting facts, words, or emphasis to achieve a preconceived intent: **"Although the Senator looks bored, when it comes time to vote he is on the right side of the issue."**

Shift:

The change of sentiment, ideas, point of view in a prose piece. Syntax, tone, and content may indicate this change of ideas. **See Turn/Voltas (in poetry).**

Subtext:

The implied meaning that underlies the main meaning of an essay or other work.

Staccato Phrases:

Phrases composed of a series of short, sharp sounds or words.

Syllepsis:

A construction in which one word is used in two different senses. **"After he threw the ball, he threw a fit."**

Semantics:

Branch of linguistics which studies the meaning of words, their historical and psychological development (etymology), their connotations, and their relation to other words.

Structural Ambiguity:

In grammar, the presence of two or more possible meanings within a single sentence or sequence of words. Also called **grammatical ambiguity**.

Sermon:

A speech given by the clergy to the congregation, typically didactic in nature.

Social Criticism:

Various subgenres (satire, essay, speech, etc.) meant to criticize current social trends, philosophies, standards, mores, etc.

Speech:

Oral essay, commentary; there is a wide variety of types of speeches. The important distinction is that a speech is spoken to an intended audience, which impacts word choice, etc.

# T

Theme:

Main message or central idea that offers insights to life; underlying ideas that the author illustrates through characterization, motifs, language plots, argument, etc.

Tone:

A writer's attitude toward his/her subject matter (implied or related directly) that is revealed through the use of diction, figurative language, and syntax; the general atmosphere created in the story. **Some words that describe tone are playful, serious, businesslike, sarcastic, humorous, formal, ornate, cheeky, and somber.** Shifts in tone may be indicated by transitional words (*but, yet, nevertheless, however, although*) that signal a turn; by a sharp contrast in diction; or by a change in sentence length. See Voice.

Tragedy:

Representations of serious actions which turn out to be disastrous and tragic.

Thesis:

An attitude or position on a problem taken by a writer with the intention of proving or supporting it with specific evidence. ***What is the premise of the work? What claim is the author making?*** Also known as the literary argument.

Trope:

A category of figures of speech that extend the literal meanings of words by inviting a comparison to other words, things, or ideas. Metaphor, metonymy and simile are three common tropes.

Turn:

A rhetorical figure that provides a change in thought signaled by words like *but*, *however*, and *yet*. In the Italian sonnet, a turn begins the sestet (line 9); in the Elizabethan sonnet, it may occur after the quatrains, as the couplet begins in line 13. A turn also may be indicated by the break between stanzas. Also called a *shift*. **See Sonnet.**

Title:

In a work of literature, a title may function to set expectations, suggest interpretations, name the occasion or the literary type, or address someone directly. The title is a part of the work, and often helps to illuminate its theme.

#### Transition:

A stylistic device used to create a link between ideas. Transitions often endow discourse with continuity and coherence. Transitions do not have to be only individual words; they can be phrases, conjunctive adverbs, anecdotes, etc. They basically constitute the movement to another idea.

#### Tongue-in-cheek:

Humongous or ironic statement not meant to be taken literally.

#### Truism:

A statement that is obviously true and says nothing new or interesting.

#### Tautology:

Needless repetition which add no meaning or understanding. ***Widow woman*** or ***free gift***.

#### Travelogue/Place Essay:

The setting provides the basis for the writing; the author recognizes something significant in the setting.

#### Treatise:

A formal and systematic exposition in writing of the principles of a subject, generally longer and more detailed than an essay.

## U

#### Understatement:

Deliberately representing something as much less than it really is. ***"Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her appearance."*** – ***Jonathon Swift***.

#### Unity:

A work of fiction or nonfiction is said to be unified as all the parts are related to one central idea or organizing principle. Thus, unity is dependent upon coherence. All sentences develop one idea. The worst enemy of **Unity** is irrelevant material.

#### Usage:

In literature, refers to the level of discourse; characteristics of those words that are not standard and require a dictionary level, such as: informal, slang, offensive, cliché, jargon, regional, technical, archaic, obsolete, and chiefly British. Use of such nonstandard words may help create characterization and tone in a work of literature.

## V

#### Verisimilitude:

Depiction of characters and setting, giving them the appearance of truth; realism.

#### Vignette:

Brief, incident, scene or story. Short anecdote.

#### Voice:

Author's distinguishing style, tone, point of view, and use of language. May be used by the author explicitly or through the speaker of the work. In grammar, active voice and passive voice refer to the use of verbs. A verb is in the active voice when it expresses an action performed by its subject. A verb in the passive voice when it expresses an action performed upon its subject or when the subject is the result of the action.

**Active:** The crew raked the leaves.

**Passive:** The leaves were raked by the crew.

Stylistically, the active voice leads to more economical and vigorous writing; more preferred. Closely related to style.

#### Vernacular:

The ordinary, everyday speech of a region.

## W

#### Wit:

Intellectually amusing language that indicates the speaker's verbal prowess in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. It uses terse language that makes a pointed statement. A form of wordplay, usually depicting humor. **Most sitcoms and works by Jane Austen use this.**

Word Play:

Use of rhetorical figures of speech and verbal wit to enhance literary work.

Whimsy:

An object, device, or creation that is fanciful or rooted in unreality.

**X**  
N/A

**Y**  
N/A

**Z**

Zeugma :

The writer uses one word to govern several successive words or clauses; the word may imply two different meanings.

**She discovered New York and her world.**

**Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave.**